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Contact: John-Mark Hack, Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy
(502) 564-4627
Doug Thomas, Kentucky Department of Agriculture
(502) 564-4696

**State Agricultural Development Board Approves \$882,000 for
Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative**

The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board voted today to approve a \$882,000 grant request submitted by the Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative in Horse Cave. The award will go to purchase equipment needed by the produce marketing cooperative to expand its production and marketing efforts, including a state of the art cantaloupe grading line that will ensure that the cooperative's products are suitable for their customers.

Governor Patton praised the Board's action to boost the efforts of producers in Hart and surrounding counties to explore alternative crops to replace lost tobacco income.

"This action means that the Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative will be able to better meet the needs of their customers in marketing their cantaloupe this year and in the future. While this money will be spent on equipment, it is an investment in an aggressive group of producers looking for income alternatives, in their agricultural diversification efforts, and in the future of agriculture in one of our state's most tobacco-dependent areas," said Governor Paul Patton.

The award was made as one of eleven projects approved by the Board during its meeting today. The Board approved a total of \$4,443,000 in state level projects, including the Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative, and \$403,600 in a variety of county-level programs.

"Kentucky's produce industry has a tremendous amount of untapped potential," Agriculture Commissioner Billy Ray Smith said. "This funding will help vegetable growers achieve that potential in an area of the state that has suffered a significant loss of tobacco income."

"This will allow our producers to further diversify from tobacco," said Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative General Manager Michael Gentry. "The grant will help more small farms move away from tobacco, enable us to reach new markets, and help to create a branded product."

Staff of the Agricultural Development Board will meet soon with the Green River Produce Marketing Cooperative Board of Directors to work out the details for the approved expansion. The commitment by the Board comes at just the time the cooperative needs to purchase the new grading line for cantaloupe processing this season.